

Notes on your desk and in the cloud: comparing Evernote and OneNote

Evernote. Evernote Corporation, 305 Walnut Street, Redwood City, CA 94063; <http://www.evernote.com>; basic version: free; premium version: \$5 per month or \$45 per year.

Microsoft OneNote. Microsoft, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399; <http://www.onenote.com>; basic version: free; premium version available with Microsoft Office 365; various pricing options for individuals and businesses, including educator discounts.

Health information professionals help users find and manage all sorts of information so that they can do their jobs better or, for patients, make informed decisions about their health. But how do you manage the information that you need to do your job better and make informed decisions? In an average day, the average health information professional may gather information from meetings, websites, books, journals, emails,

and colleagues. How do you keep track of all this material so that you can find it again when and where you need it? When you come back from a conference, consult with colleagues about a problem, attend multiple meetings, or research an issue, how do you store that information so that you can retrieve it next week, next month, or next year? Enter note-taking applications, which are designed to consolidate many types of information into a single, searchable tool. Of these applications, two of the best known are Evernote and Microsoft OneNote.

Microsoft OneNote debuted in 2003 as part of Microsoft Office 2003 [1]; it is now part of Office 2013 but is also available as a free download. Most features are free, including 7 gigabytes (GBs) of storage on OneDrive, Microsoft's cloud storage platform. A few premium features are available only with an Office 365 subscription: the ability to store notebooks locally rather than in the cloud, syncing to OneDrive for Business, password protection for notebooks, and more. Desktop applications are available for Windows 7, Windows 8, and Mac OS 10.9 (Mavericks), plus mobile apps for iOS, Android, and Windows Phone. A web-based application is also available, so you can use OneNote without installing anything on your computer. OneNote is often available as part of an organization's Microsoft Office suite, so you may have access to the premium version at work.

Evernote is a standalone product that debuted in 2008 [2] and is available as a free download with premium features available for purchase. Premium features include collaboration tools, additional upload allowance, and ability to search inside stored portable document format files (PDFs). Evernote also offers Evernote Business, a shared Evernote environment for an entire company or unit for \$10 per month per user. Evernote offers desktop applications for Windows 7, Windows 8, and Mac OS 10.6.6 or higher, plus mobile apps for Android, iOS, Windows Phone, Blackberry, and HP WebOS.

In this review, I introduce the functions and features of both products, summarize the differences between the two, and suggest some

reasons why you might want to begin using one. For this review, I evaluated the desktop applications for PCs with Windows 7 and for Macs with OS X Mavericks, along with the mobile apps for the iPad. I used the premium version of Evernote and the paid version of OneNote included with Microsoft Office 2010. I did not evaluate the Android apps for either product. Please note that both products offer too many features to cover in a single review of this length, so I have focused on the features that are most likely to be useful to information professionals. Table 1 provides a summary of functions and features by product and platform.

Organizing, tagging, and searching. Both Evernote and OneNote are designed to organize information in multiple formats from multiple sources in ways that mimic paper notebooks. Individual notes can be consolidated into sections and notebooks (OneNote) or notebooks and notebook stacks (Evernote). You can assign tags to notes in both products, making it easier to find related notes across notebooks. Both store your notes online, so they are accessible anywhere from multiple devices.

Gathering and storing information from the web. Both tools provide a variety of ways to capture and store information. The simplest and most common way to input information is to type it in or copy and paste it from another source. In Windows, both products track the source of copied or pasted information automatically—a very useful feature for a busy information professional—but OneNote does it best. Evernote records the uniform resource locator (URL) for the first bit of text pasted into a note, but if you paste content from other sources, it does not record those. OneNote for Windows records the URL for every snippet you paste from a web page, making it easy to link various bits of information to their sources. Unfortunately, neither product for the Mac records URLs when copying text from web pages.

In addition to copying and pasting, both products provide other, more powerful options for grabbing

content from web pages. The Evernote Web Clipper—a browser extension available for Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Opera, and Safari—allows you to clip an entire page or a section of a page, preserving text and image formatting. Exact functions and features vary from browser to browser. Microsoft provides a bookmarklet called Clip to OneNote, which will save an image of an entire page to a note. With OneNote for Windows—but not Mac—you can also print a page from any application to a note using the standard Print command. In addition, both tools also allow you to capture information from various websites automatically by integrating with IFTTT <<http://ifttt.com>>, a site that facilitates communication between popular sites and services. For example, IFTTT allows you to send material posted to sites like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn to a note in Evernote or OneNote automatically, so you can keep track of the content you share online.

Storing documents and media. Both applications allow you to attach files to notes: word processing documents, spreadsheets, presentations, images, PDFs, and so on. Evernote also displays PDFs within the body of notes and, with the premium version, makes them searchable. PDFs of handwritten notes, however, are not searchable. Both products allow you to capture and store photos and multimedia, including from mobile devices. With either mobile app, you can add photos from the camera roll on the mobile device, or you can take a picture and add it directly to a note. Table 1 shows additional ways to add content to notes.

Integrating with email, especially Microsoft Outlook. One of the more useful features of both products is their integration with email. You can email content to both products, and the content of the message plus any attachments will be stored in a note. Both products also integrate with Outlook for Windows email, with extensions that let you send a message to a specific note with a couple of clicks. Paid versions of OneNote for Windows also allow you to link notes

to Outlook calendar appointments and create Outlook tasks within a note. Both features are especially useful for taking notes at meetings.

Look and feel. OneNote offers a cleaner look and more closely mimics a paper notebook than Evernote does. OneNote also allows you to arrange information in a notebook in a non-linear way (e.g., placing a picture or table to the right of a chunk of text). You can drag snippets of information around to create the desired arrangement, similar to a stripped-down desktop publisher. Evernote provides standard editing tools but only allows a linear arrangement of content.

Living in the cloud: accessing and sharing from anywhere. The biggest advantage that both of these tools offer is the ability to access notes anywhere, anytime. You can search all of your notes from anywhere too, so it is easy to find the exact snippet you need. You can also share notebooks, making it easy to collaborate on projects and share information with colleagues. In addition, OneNote allows you to share notes to a network drive or SharePoint site to facilitate collaboration within your organization.

Using Evernote and OneNote for information professionals. So, how can the busy information professional get the most out of one or both of these applications? Both applications are excellent for storing meeting notes, and OneNote's integration with Microsoft Outlook connects meeting information with the Outlook calendar and to-do list seamlessly. Similarly, these applications are great tools for storing materials from conferences, workshops, and webinars. You can use a mobile device to take notes and then store those notes with accompanying handouts and downloaded presentation files, or you can take notes with pen and paper, then scan and store them with other conference materials. You can also organize all your travel information for a conference: reservation confirmations, itineraries, and so on. Either of these applications is also helpful for organizing research notes for reference questions, projects, pre-

Table 1
Feature comparison by product and platform

Features	Evernote				Microsoft OneNote			
	Web app	Mac	PC	iOS	Web app	Mac	PC	iOS
Adding content								
Import web pages	Yes	Yes	Yes	Only via email	Yes	Yes	Yes	Requires Mac desktop
Attach files to notes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Photos and audio only	Photos only	Yes	Yes	Photos only
Print files to notes	N/A	No	No	No	N/A	No	Yes	No
Add photos to notes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Record audio into note	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Record video into note	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Email information to a note	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Handwrite on touchscreen devices	No	No	No	Yes with additional app	No	Not tested	Yes	No
Searching, organization, and integration								
Search across all notes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Assign tags to notes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Save emails from Outlook to a note	N/A	Not tested	Yes	N/A	N/A	Not tested	Yes	N/A
Link notes to Outlook appointments	N/A	No	No	No	N/A	Not tested	Yes	N/A
Create Outlook tasks in notes	N/A	No	No	No	N/A	Not tested	Yes	N/A
Sharing and collaborating								
Email a note	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Share a single note with other users	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Share a notebook with other users	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

sentations, and articles. You can store snippets of web pages, ideas, charts, search results, information from books and journal articles, emails, information about various products, and just about anything else that will inform your project. Storing emails is especially useful when you are changing jobs and losing access to your old email account, or you want all your archived email in a single, searchable place, no matter which account it came from. Regardless of how you use it, either of these applications will help you reduce paper clutter, allow access to your information from all of

your devices anywhere, and make that information searchable, so you can find the tidbit you need, when and where you need it.

Conclusion. OneNote and Evernote are both solid products that could be useful to any information professional. Each has different strengths and weaknesses, so select the one that best meets your needs and enjoy better control over and access to the information in your life.

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3163/1536-5050.102.4.019>